

Healthy Bites



Information To Improve the Selection and Use Of Foods In Your Home

Freezing Summer Produce

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Freezing is a popular method because it's quick and easy to do. High quality results from freezing depend on a few key steps: fresh high-quality produce, proper methods of preparation such as blanching, proper storage materials and correct freezer temperatures.

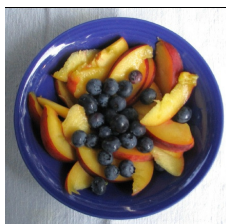
Freezing cannot improve the quality of any food, so it's important to start with the best quality fruits and vegetables at their peak of maturity. Fruit should be firm yet ripe. Vegetables should be young, tender, unwilted and garden-fresh.

Fruits and vegetables contain enzymes which are slowed down but not destroyed during freezing. If not inactivated, these enzymes can cause color and flavor changes as well as loss of nutrients. Blanching is used to inactivate enzymes in vegetables. In simple terms, during the blanching process the vegetables are exposed to boiling water or steam for a short period of time. Then the vegetables are cooled rapidly using ice water to stop the cooking process. Blanching times vary for each type of vegetable; it is important to follow recommended blanching time because over-blanching results in a cooked product and a loss of flavor, color and nutrients. Conversely, under-blanching stimulates enzyme activity and is worse than no blanching at all.

Keeping your produce at its optimum quality while frozen depends a great deal on using the proper storage materials. Storage materials should be moisture-vapor resistant; durable and leak-proof; not become brittle and crack at low temperatures; resistant to oil, grease or water; protect foods from absorption of food flavors or odors; easy to seal and easy to mark. When purchasing containers or flexible bags or wrappings, make sure it is labeled as suitable for freezing.



Check your freezer to make sure it is holding foods at 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Use a freezer thermometer to determine whether your freezer is working at the correct temperature. Storing frozen foods at higher temperatures than 0 degrees Fahrenheit shortens their life. Freeze foods as soon as they are packed, labeled and sealed. Make sure not to overload your freezer with unfrozen foods. Leaving a little space between packages ensures that air can circulate around the foods. Once the packages are frozen, they can then be stored closer together.



Adapted from article by Beth Waitrovich, county extension director, Michigan State University Extension Dickinson County.

MSU Extension Family and Consumer Science educators are located in all 83 counties to integrate university and community resources to help families succeed. For more information on this topic and other issues on food, nutrition, parenting and money management, contact the Macomb County Extension Office at 586-469-5180.

WORD WISE

Lutein (pronounced LOO-teen) and
Zeaxanthin (zee-ah-zan-thin)

Antioxidant nutrient substances belonging to the carotenoid family. Lutein and zeaxanthin are abundant in green leafy vegetables and yellow fruits and vegetables.

The words **Lutein** and **Zeaxanthin**
are found on page 2.

Mount Clemens Farmers Market

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THE MARKET OPENS FOR THE SEASON SATURDAY, MAY 5TH



MARKET DAYS AND HOURS

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May thru November

MARKET LOCATION

Located at the City's Park & Ride Lot on North River Road between I-94 & North Bound Gratiot Avenue

Go for the "Greens"



Spinach, kale, collards, mustard greens, beet greens, romaine lettuce, and other leafy greens are the standout vegetables. They are jam-packed with vitamins A, C, and K, folate, potassium, magnesium, iron, **lutein**, and phytochemicals. And it's not unusual to see studies on diet and disease give them special recognition with a phrase like "vegetables—especially green leafy vegetables—were associated with a lower risk of..." All vegetables are good vegetables. But greens have something more going for them. Here's a sampling of some findings—and a few hunches—that may explain what's so good about greens.

Eyes: As you age, your eyes age. Two carotenoid pigments in leafy greens - **lutein and zeaxanthin** - may help protect both the lens and the retina. Leafy greens are incredibly high in lutein and zeaxanthin, so just one or two servings a week places people in the highest intakes. Researchers got interested in the two carotenoids in part because both concentrate in the eye.

Bones: Which foods keep your skeleton strong? Most people would never think of kale, collards, spinach, and other greens as bone builders. Yet researchers suspect that green leafy vegetables protect bones because they're loaded with vitamin K. Vitamin K is best known for its ability to help blood clot, but a growing body of evidence suggests that it does much more. Vitamin K is important for proper functioning of bone-dependent proteins. Bone is constantly breaking down and rebuilding, and it needs those proteins to build.



The Brain & Beyond: Researchers are hunting down clues that leafy greens may do more. For example:

- **Memory.** Women who consumed the most leafy greens had less cognitive decline—that is, a smaller drop in memory and other test scores over two years—than did women who consumed the fewest green leafy vegetables.
- **Diabetes.** When researchers studied nearly 40,000 female health professionals, they found no link overall with fruits and vegetables. But among overweight women, those who consumed the most green leafy vegetables had about a 15 percent lower risk of diabetes than those who consumed the least.
- **Colon Cancer.** Men who consumed the most leafy vegetables (about two servings per day) had a 14 percent lower risk of colorectal cancer than those who consumed the least (about one serving per week).
- **Stroke.** The risk of non-hemorrhagic stroke (which accounts for 80 percent of all strokes in the United States) was about 20 percent lower for every serving of green leafy vegetables people consumed per day.



In conclusion, leafy greens are a low-calorie, nutritional powerhouse. They've got vitamin K, potassium and magnesium, along with antioxidants and other phytochemicals. Most green leafy vegetables supply not just vitamin K and lutein, but one to three days' worth of vitamin A and 10% to 20% of a day's vitamin C and folate.

(Please consult your physician before making any changes to your diet.)

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RECIPE

Vegetable Chunk Salad

Ingredients:

1/2 pint cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
1 large red or green bell pepper, cut into bite-size chunks
1/2 red onion, chopped
1/2 cucumber, cut into bite-size chunks
2 ribs celery, cut into 1-inch pieces
1/2 squash, cut into bite-size pieces
3 tablespoons of vegetable oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning
Coarse salt and pepper



Combine vegetables in a medium bowl. Place oil, vinegar, sugar, and Italian seasoning in a small plastic container with a lid. Secure lid and shake dressing vigorously for 1 minute. Pour dressing over salad and toss. Season salad with salt and pepper, to taste. Serve on a bed of greens

Did You Know?

Angel Food Ministries (AFM) is a terrific source of low-cost nutritious food for you and your family. Each month you receive one box of food including both fresh and frozen items. You pay only \$25 for the food which is valued at approximately \$75. Each month the food items change.

To find out more about Angel Food Ministries and/or sign up, simply call 1-877-366-3646. It's a free call. **There are no income limits for this program.**



Is your child eating smart?

The best way to keep your kid svelte and smart is *not* with a traditional low-calorie, low-fat or low-carb diet.



The real culprits in childhood obesity are foods that increase blood sugar. Foods that suppress kids' appetites and keep young brains from crashing after sugar high need to be offered more often. Some examples of these foods are oatmeal, peanuts, bread, dried beans, whole fruits, vegetables and vinegary salad dressings.



Tips From the Experts

- ◆ **Ban sugary drinks.** Studies show that the risk of childhood obesity soars as sweetened soft drink consumption goes up. Limit fruit juice to 1 cup a day.
- ◆ **Restrict fast food consumption** to no more than once a week; less is better.
- ◆ **Forget low-fat diets and fat free foods.** Fats actually suppress blood sugar surges and are filling, so kids need to eat some fat to feel full. "Throw away the fat-free dressings." "Give your kids peanut butter on whole-grain toast for breakfast, avocado dips as an afternoon snack and broccoli sautéed in olive oil for dinner." Avoid harmful trans fats (in many processed foods and baked goods), and don't overindulge in saturated animal fats.
- ◆ **Give kids small portions on small plates.** Studies show that everyone is likely to eat more when given large portions.
- ◆ **Be in charge of what you offer your kids to eat at home.** If your children reject something, do not offer alternatives. The kids will not starve.
- ◆ **Don't keep junk food in the house.** Good snacks: nuts, whole or dried fruit.
- ◆ **Don't watch tv during meals.** It leads to inactivity and overeating.



Think about it: Strong brains need exercise

Exercise may improve brain health. Researchers at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in San Diego have linked physical exercise to neurogenesis, the scientific term for new brain cell growth.



There is growing evidence that regular and consistent, moderate physical exercise can improve cognitive performance in young, healthy individuals and in the aging population. Research also revealed that physical exercise increases the birth and survival of new brain cells in the mouse hippocampus, a brain area important for learning and memory.

FitSmart by Jorge Cruise

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For more information or questions regarding food and nutrition, contact us!

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